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# Selected Speeches and News Releases

March 9 - March 16, 1989

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# Statement

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U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Information

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Prepared for delivery by Dr. Frank E. Young, Commissioner, Food and Drug Administration, and Dr. John Moore, Acting Deputy Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, and John Bode, Assistant Secretary for Food and Consumer Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture, March 16.

“In the last few weeks there has been a growing public controversy over the potential harmful effects of a chemical called Alar, which is used by apple growers to retain the crispness of their fruit as it goes to market. It is used primarily in the growing of Delicious, Stayman, and McIntosh apples.

“The federal government believes that it is safe for Americans to eat apples, and the responsible federal agencies are working together to reassure the public of this fact.

“Recently, the Natural Resources Defense Council has claimed that children face a massive public health problem from pesticide residues in food. Data used by NRDC, which claims cancer risks from Alar are 100 times higher than the Environmental Protection Agency estimates, were rejected in 1985 by an independent scientific advisory board created by Congress. Alar has been used for decades in apple growing, and it has been the subject of many studies on possible harmful side effects.

“A recent progress report on preliminary results from an ongoing study shows that a breakdown product of Alar caused certain kinds of tumors in mice. Based on this report, EPA has begun the process to phase-out Alar in apple growing if the final data, which will be independently reviewed, demonstrate a need for cancellation. Cancellation could then occur by July 1990. EPA believes the potential risk from Alar is not of sufficient certainty and magnitude to require immediate suspension of the use of this chemical. EPA and others have pointed to lack of scientific validity in the suggestion by the NRDC that the risk is much greater than has been stated by EPA. The Food and Drug Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services, the agency responsible for monitoring pesticide residues in food, has found either no residues or residues that are far below EPA’s tolerance. Both FDA and EPA believe that Alar use over this interim period is safe and does not pose a health



risk to the American public. Available data show overwhelmingly that apples carry very small amounts of Alar. In addition its use has decreased dramatically over the past several years; estimates are that 95 percent of the apple crop was not treated in 1988.

“It should also be noted that risk estimates for Alar and other pesticides based on animal testing are rough and are not precise predictions of human disease. Because of conservative assumptions used by EPA, actual risks may be lower or even zero.

“The FDA, EPA and the U.S. Department of Agriculture believe there is not an imminent hazard posed to children in the consumption of apples at this time, despite claims to the contrary.

“Therefore, the federal government encourages school systems and others responsible for the diets of children to continue to serve apples and other nutritious fruit to American children.

“This is an issue that will continue to be monitored closely by the responsible federal agencies that have acted in the past to cancel pesticide uses which pose a cancer risk.”

Al Heier (EPA) at (202) 382-4374

Dave Warren (USDA) at (202) 447-4026

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# News Releases

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## USDA WITHDRAWS INTENT TO PROPOSE “BILL BACK” PROCEDURES

WASHINGTON, March 9—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced withdrawal of its proposal to “bill-back” sellers of livestock found to contain illegal drug residues.

B.H. (Bill) Jones, administrator of USDA’s Packers and Stockyards Administration, said withdrawal of the proposal does not alter USDA’s commitment to assure a meat supply free of drug residue.

He said a notice, published in the Federal Register May 24, 1988, was intended to elicit comments on a “bill-back” mechanism designed to shift economic responsibility for violative drug residues from the meat packer to the person causing the violation. The proposal sought suggestions on deterring violative sulfa and antibiotic drug residues found in carcasses of young calves, cull dairy cows, and swine.

Of the comments received, 87 percent opposed the bill back concept. The concerns centered on the ability to trace back and accurately identify the source of illegal residues.

Jones stated that withdrawal of this proposal would not preclude anyone suffering financial hardship because of an illegal drug residue from seeking restitution. He said a buyer is entitled to know the identity of the seller, including a consignor, when a carcass is condemned as a result of a drug residue violation.

Jones said he is encouraged that all segments of the industry have expressed willingness to work with each other and USDA to solve this problem.

Frances Freider (202) 382-9528

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## USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET PRICE FOR UPLAND COTTON

WASHINGTON, March 9—Acting Under Secretary of Agriculture Richard W. Goldberg today announced the prevailing world market price, adjusted to U.S. quality and location (adjusted world price), for Strict Low Middling (SLM) 1-1/16 inch (micronaire 3.5-4.9) upland cotton (base quality) and the coarse count adjustment in effect from 12:01 a.m. Friday, March 10, through midnight Thursday, March 16.

Since the AWP is less than the 1987-crop and 1988-crop base quality loan rates of 52.25 and 51.80 cents per pound, respectively, the loan repayment rate for 1987-crop and 1988-crop upland cotton during this period is equal to the AWP adjusted for the specific quality and location.

Because the loan repayment rate for 1988-crop upland cotton in effect during this period is less than the established loan rate, loan deficiency payments will be made to eligible producers who agree to forgo loan eligibility on their 1988-crop upland cotton. The loan deficiency payment rate for cotton which the producer agrees not to pledge as loan collateral during this period will equal the difference between the loan rate and the loan repayment rate in effect for that period.

The AWP will continue to be used to determine the value of upland cotton that is obtained in exchange for commodity certificates.

Based on data for the week ending March 9, the AWP for upland cotton and the coarse count adjustment are determined as follows:

### Adjusted World Price

Northern Europe Price .....	63.86
Adjustments:	
Average U.S. spot market location .....	12.00
SLM 1-1/16 inch cotton .....	2.00
Average U.S. location .....	0.42
Sum of Adjustments .....	<u>-14.42</u>
ADJUSTED WORLD PRICE .....	49.44 cents/lb.

### Coarse Count Adjustment

Northern Europe Price .....	63.86
Northern Europe Coarse Count Price .....	<u>-59.10</u>
	4.76
Adjustment to SLM 1-inch cotton .....	<u>-4.15</u>
COARSE COUNT ADJUSTMENT .....	0.61 cents/lb.



The next AWP and coarse count adjustment announcement will be made on March 16.

Charles Cunningham (202) 447-7954

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USDA ANNOUNCES FINAL COMPLIANCE FIGURES FOR 1987  
ACREAGE REDUCTION PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, March 10—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced that producers with 87 percent of the base acreage for wheat, feed grains, upland and extra-long staple (ELS) cotton and rice were in compliance with 1987 production adjustment program requirements.

A total of 61.2 million acres were taken out of production and devoted to conservation uses.

Producers complying with the acreage reduction programs agreed to reduce by 27.5 percent their plantings of wheat, 20 percent for feed grains, 25 percent for upland cotton, 15 percent for ELS cotton and 35 percent for rice.

Feed grain producers were offered an optional 15 percent paid land diversion.

The following table is a national summary of the 1987 compliance report.

	Effective Base	Complying Base	Idled Base	Percent Complying
	(million acres)			
Wheat	87.6	76.6	23.9	87.5
Corn	81.5	73.8	23.2	90.5
Sorghum	17.4	14.9	4.1	85.3
Barley	12.5	10.6	3.0	84.6
Oats	8.4	3.8	0.8	44.7
Feed Grains	119.8	103.1	31.1	85.4
Cotton-Upland	14.7	13.5	3.9	91.9
-ELS	0.086	0.019	0.003	22.6
Rice	4.2	4.0	2.3	95.6
Total	226.4	197.2	61.2	87.1

Printed copies of the tables that show by commodity and state the final compliance figures, for total farms, acreages and percentages can be obtained from the USDA Office of Information, News Division-Room 404-A, Washington, D.C. 20250. Telephone: (202) 447-4026, ask for press release number 286-89.

Bruce Merkle (202) 447-6787

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## **NEW ROOTSTOCK COULD MEAN INCREASED CITRUS HARVESTS**

WASHINGTON, March 13—A Chinese citrus variety used as a rootstock could give citrus growers bigger harvests and healthier trees in the Florida flatwoods, where trees often can't get enough magnesium from the soil.

After 14 years of tests, U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists are releasing Sun Chu Sha citrus rootstock to growers and nurserymen. Commercial citrus trees are produced by grafting onto rootstocks.

Florida's flatwoods, an area covering about half of the citrus producing region of the state, contain large amounts of calcium carbonate, which binds magnesium. Therefore, rootstocks do not readily absorb magnesium, an essential element for plant growth.

As a result, most citrus rootstocks grown in this area show magnesium deficiency symptoms expressed as yellow leaves and reduced tree vigor. "Not only does Sun Chu Sha efficiently use the magnesium available, but it also resists most of the diseases that plague citrus in Florida," said Donald J. Hutchison of USDA's Agricultural Research Service. "Also, fruit yield is equivalent to that from trees grown on standard rootstocks."

According to Hutchison, an ARS plant geneticist in Orlando, Fla., citrus growers in that area suffer severe losses from citrus blight, citrus tristeza virus and phytophthora foot rot. By the eighth year, many citrus trees show blight symptoms.

None of the trees grafted onto Sun Chu Sha rootstock has shown signs of blight in the 14 years they've been evaluated, Hutchison reported. Screening results indicate the trees tolerate citrus tristeza virus phytophthora foot rot.

We've also tested this rootstock in Texas where soil conditions are similar," said Hutchison, "There, too, we've had excellent results."

Grapefruit, mandarin hybrids and sweet orange performed staisfactorily when grafted onto Sun Chu Sha. Native to the Kwangtung Province of China, the rootstock was intorduced into the U.S. in 1921.

Hutchison's limited supply of Sun Chu Sha budwood is free from psorosis, xyuloporosis and exocortis viruses. Growers and nurserymen may obrain budwood for grafting from Huchison at the U.S. Horticultural Research Laboratory in Orlando.

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## COULD BOVINE VIRUS SHED LIGHT ON AIDS?

WASHINGTON, March 13—Could a cattle virus discovered 17 years ago by a U.S. Department of Agriculture scientist be a good model for learning about Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome?

To find out, the National Cancer Institute of the National Institutes of Health has approved a \$1-million, 5-year study by the USDA's Agricultural Research Service and Iowa State University. "Veterinary researchers want to know if the bovine immunodeficiencylike virus (BIV) damages the immune system in cattle. Medical researchers want to know whether BIV can be a useful model in AIDS research," said veterinary immunologist James A. Roth of ISU's College of Veterinary Medicine, Ames, Iowa. He will lead the study in conjunction with two other ISU scientists and three scientists at the ARS National Animal Disease Center in Ames.

According to Martin J. Van Der Maaten, who discovered bovine immunodeficiency-like virus, "BIV has some structural similarities to the AIDS virus, but there is no evidence that it can be transmissible to humans. We will not be working with the AIDS virus itself." Van Der Maaten is a veterinary medical officer in the Virology Cattle Research Laboratory at the Ames center.

BIV "may provide a model useful for exploring the complexities of the human AIDS virus and possibly may be useful for developing AIDS prevention strategies," said Jack Gruber, chief of the biological carcinogenesis branch of the National Cancer Institute's Division of Cancer Etiology, Bethesda, Md.

Van Der Maaten hopes the new study will give medical researchers an animal model for AIDS studies. "But we don't want to raise any false hopes," he added. "Right now we have a lot of questions about BIV and



few answers. One question is whether the virus is linked with any animal disease. Another is whether and how BIV may interact with other cattle viruses—such as bovine leukemia and bovine herpes viruses. We want to know if these viruses enhance disease problems by increasing the likelihood that BIV may weaken the animal's immune system.”

In the late 1960's, Van Der Maaten and Janice M. Miller, who was then at the University of Wisconsin, were working separately to find the cause of bovine leukemia. In 1969, Miller—today the research leader at the ARS cattle virology lab—isolated a bovine virus. In 1972, Van Der Maaten isolated bovine immunodeficiency-like virus.

But after Miller joined ARS in 1972, she and Van Der Maaten discovered that the virus she had isolated was the cause of bovine leukemia.

With this discovery, research interest in BIV declined until the mid-1980's, when the AIDS problem led to new investigations of BIV's molecular structure by researchers at the Frederick, Md., Cancer Institute. Van Der Maaten supplied the virus samples.

The Frederick studies turned up similarities between BIV and the AIDS virus.

Both of these viruses, along with the bovine and human leukemia viruses, all belong to the same group of agents called retroviruses. The discoveries of the two bovine viruses by Van Der Maaten and Miller were useful to medical researchers in the subsequent discoveries of the viruses that cause leukemia and AIDS in people, according to Harley Moon, who directs the ARS animal disease center in Ames. “We hope to find out if the interaction of BIV and other cattle viruses may increase disease problems,” Miller said. “And NIH is particularly interested in identifying the types of cells in which BIV replicates and how the virus could produce pathogenic effects.”

Last November, Miller was recognized as ARS distinguished scientist of the year for 1988 for discovering the bovine leukemia virus.

Besides Roth, Van Der Maaten and Miller, the other researchers in the study are Susan L. Carpenter and Prem S. Paul of ISU and Cecelia A. Whetstone of ARS.

Jim De Quattro (301) 344-4296

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3.2 MILLION ACRES BID DURING THE EIGHTH CRP SIGNUP

WASHINGTON, March 14—The U.S. Department of Agriculture received bids to place 3,223,662 acres in the Conservation Reserve Program during the eighth signup period Feb. 6-24.

USDA’s Commodity Credit Corporation Executive Vice President Milton Hertz said the number of acres enrolled in the CRP, based upon the acceptance of bids, will be announced in mid-June. “The acreage eligibility criteria was expanded beginning with the eighth signup to include cropped wetland areas and fields with evidence of scour erosion. Many of the bids received in the lower Mississippi River valley and the Dakotas are believed to be due to these changes,” Hertz said. “Although precise numbers will not be available until June, we believe that 200,000 to 300,000 of the 3.2 million acres bid were offered under the cropped wetland and scour erosion criteria,” Hertz said. “Many of these fields, particularly those in the southern regions, will be planted to hardwood trees or other vegetation that is ideal for wildlife habitat.”

The total acreage to be planted to trees increased from 6.5 percent of all acreage bid during the seventh signup to 8 percent of all acreage bid during the eighth signup, a total of 257,622 acres.

The following table shows acres bid, tree acres bid, and number of bids by state.

	ACRES BID	TREE ACRES BID	NUMBER OF BIDS
National Summary	3,223,661	257,621	34,389
Alabama	39,187	26,431	734
Arkansas	36,017	26,215	350
California	8,302	5	27
Colorado	80,962	0	314
Delaware	171	52	9
Florida	10,514	9,772	212
Georgia	68,487	64,927	1,394
Idaho	45,772	44	199
Illinois	115,522	7,344	2,586
Indiana	64,919	1,858	1,519
Iowa	193,726	635	3,614
Kansas	199,001	411	2,331
Kentucky	16,128	717	354

Louisiana	20,274	14,975	207
Maine	3,451	274	82
Maryland	2,011	297	76
Massachusetts	13	0	4
Michigan	28,785	1,444	671
Minnesota	139,500	2,272	2,306
Mississippi	78,164	53,682	1,201
Missouri	76,393	3,438	1,326
Montana	237,353	16	677
Nebraska	81,513	317	1,068
Nevada	54	0	1
New Jersey	176	0	5
New Mexico	10,388	0	39
New York	4,677	397	109
North Carolina	10,103	6,032	551
North Dakota	569,412	241	3,119
Ohio	37,445	1,074	883
Oklahoma	58,781	418	487
Oregon	14,464	961	92
Pennsylvania	11,130	172	247
Puerto Rico	60	0	1
South Carolina	25,173	22,185	613
South Dakota	529,997	85	2,550
Tennessee	31,515	3,173	702
Texas	250,897	1,683	1,305
Utah	3,628	0	33
Virginia	8,896	1,822	312
Washington	31,614	19	174
West Virginia	37	0	1
Wisconsin	68,408	4,233	1,870
Wyoming	10,641	0	34

Robert Feist (202) 447-6789

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## **USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET RICE PRICES**

WASHINGTON, March 14—Acting Under Secretary of Agriculture Richard W. Goldberg today announced the prevailing world market prices of milled rice, loan rate basis, as follows:

- long grain whole kernels, 10.33 cents per pound;
- medium grain whole kernels, 9.69 cents per pound;
- short grain whole kernels, 9.62 cents per pound;
- broken kernels, 5.17 cents per pound.

Minimum loan repayment rates for 1987 crop loans are the higher of the world price or 50 percent of the loan rate. For 1988 crop rice, the minimum repayment rates are the higher of the world price or 60 percent of the loan rate.

Based upon these prevailing world market prices for milled rice, rough rice world prices are estimated to be:

- long grain, \$6.39 per hundredweight;
- medium grain, \$6.06 per hundredweight;
- short grain, \$5.78 per hundredweight.

The prices announced are effective today at 3:00 P.M. EST. The next scheduled price announcement will be made March 21 at 3:00 P.M. EST, although prices may be announced sooner if warranted.

Gene Rosera (202) 447-5954

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## **CONSUMERS ADVISED TO USE PLAIN WATER TO WASH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES**

WASHINGTON, March 14—U.S. Department of Agriculture officials advise consumers to wash fresh fruits and vegetables with plain water, not soap and water, to remove surface pesticide residues and other impurities.

USDA Consumer Advisor Ann Chadwick said that consumers recently have been advised by a private organization to use soap in washing fruits and vegetables. In some cases, this recommendation has been attributed to government sources. “In fact, USDA, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration—the three federal agencies with regulatory responsibility for foods—all recommend washing



fresh fruits and vegetables with just plain water,” said Chadwick. “We do not recommend washing food with soap. Soap residues may be difficult to remove from some foods, and soap is not intended to be consumed.”

Washing with water helps remove soil particles and other debris that may be hard to see, especially on leafy green vegetables, Chadwick said. “Washing with water also will help remove any existing surface pesticide residues. Thick-skinned produce may be scrubbed with a brush if desired.”

Consumers who have questions about handling food safely may call the toll-free USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 800-535-4555 (447-3333 in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area), or their local Cooperative Extension Service office. CES offices are listed under county government in local telephone directories.

Ann Chadwick (202) 382-9681

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## **PUBLIC MEETING SET MARCH 30 FOR FIELD TEST OF WILDLIFE RABIES VACCINE**

WASHINGTON, March 15—The U.S. Department of Agriculture will hold a public meeting regarding a field test of a genetically engineered rabies vaccine for wildlife on March 30 at 10 a.m. at the Holiday Inn, 8120 Wisconsin Ave., Bethesda, Md.

The USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service has issued an environmental assessment and a preliminary finding that the field trials will have no significant impact on the environment.

Representatives from several agencies within four federal departments—Agriculture, Defense, Health and Human Services, and State—have cooperated in the review process for the field test. Experts from these agencies will review preliminary findings and respond to questions from the public. Following this review, the public will be allowed to present prepared statements. Time limits for such statements will be determined by the number who wish to speak.

APHIS will make a final decision on the field test following the hearing.



The Wistar Institute of Anatomy and Biology, Philadelphia, has applied for permission to perform the tests on three islands off the Virginia and South Carolina shore. The test calls for enclosing an encapsulated vaccine in a bait that would be especially attractive to raccoons.

Scientists are targeting raccoons because they are the primary reservoir of rabies on the Eastern Seaboard. Raccoons who eat the bait would be vaccinated against rabies to prevent transferring the disease to domestic animals and humans. "The vaccine has been engineered to confer immunity to wildlife without exposing them to the disease," said Larry B. Slagle, APHIS acting administrator. Slagle explained that by using gene splicing, researchers have been able to transfer the genes that code for the harmless virus coat proteins from the rabies virus. These genes are then inserted into the vaccinia virus, the same virus formerly used in smallpox vaccinations. Inside the vaccinia virus, the coat proteins give immunity but cannot make the animal ill, he said.

Wistar has tested the vaccine on many species of animals in the laboratory and observed no ill effects in the immunized animals.

Those who would like to make a statement at the March 30 hearing should preregister between 9:30 and 10 a.m. Speakers will be heard in the order they register and are asked to bring two copies of their statements.

A copy of the environmental assessment is available for public inspection at USDA, Room 1141-S, 14th and Independence Avenue, S.W. Washington, D.C., Monday through Friday, between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

Anita Brown (301) 436-5931

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## **MARKETING QUOTAS APPROVED BY BURLEY TOBACCO GROWERS**

WASHINGTON, March 16—Preliminary results from a mail referendum held Feb. 27-March 2 show that burley tobacco growers have approved marketing quotas for crop years 1989 through 1991, Milton Hertz, administrator of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, announced today.

Hertz said results from the seven major burley-producing states show 142,952 of the 146,205 growers voting—97.8 percent—voted in favor of quotas. A vote of at least two-thirds in favor was necessary for continuing quotas for the three-year period.

In the previous burley mail referendum, 97 percent of participating burley growers voted in favor of quotas for the 1986, 1987 and 1988 crops, Hertz said.

**Preliminary results, by state, follow:**

STATE	YES	NO	TOTAL	% IN FAVOR
Indiana	4,465	163	4,628	96.5
Kentucky	86,268	1,246	87,514	98.6
North Carolina	5,541	167	5,708	97.0
Ohio	5,942	193	6,135	97.0
Tennessee	31,632	1,215	32,847	96.0
Virginia	7,735	222	7,957	97.0
West Virginia	1,369	47	1,416	98.0
TOTALS	142,952	3,253	146,205	97.8

Bruce Merkle (202) 447-6787

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**USDA SETS HEARING ON PROPOSED CAROLINAS FEDERAL MILK MARKETING ORDER**

WASHINGTON, March 16—Dairy farmers, dairy farmer cooperatives, milk processors, consumer organizations and private citizens may testify at a USDA hearing 1:30 p.m. Monday, April 17, at the Ramada Inn South-Airport, 515 Clanton Rd., Charlotte, N.C., on a proposal to implement a federal milk marketing order for North and South Carolina.

J. Patrick Boyle, administrator of USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service, said the proponents of the order, 10 dairy farmer organizations marketing milk in the two states, claim the order is necessary to ensure an adequate supply of milk for consumers in both states and to set minimum prices milk handlers (bottlers) must pay dairy farmers for milk.

The primary milk consumption areas in the two states include Charlotte, Greensboro, Winston-Salem, Raleigh, Durham, Asheville and Fayetteville in North Carolina, and Columbia, Charleston and Greenville in South Carolina.

Boyle said the proponents claim that the federal marketing order is needed to address milk supply problems. North Carolina regulates its milk production under a state order; South Carolina lacks any milk marketing regulations. A federal order, say the proponents, could match supply and demand for the entire area, with special circumstances spelled out to deal with uses of milk in oversupply, and to encourage delivery of milk to bottling plants in undersupply. Such arrangements are common in other areas covered by federal milk marketing orders.

Any order USDA might recommend after the hearing would have to be approved in a producer referendum before it could be put into effect, Boyle said. "It has been almost a decade since the department received a request for a new federal milk marketing order. The last approved were for Idaho in 1981 and Alabama in 1982."

Federal milk marketing orders do not set retail prices consumers pay for milk, Boyle said. The orders affect consumers by assuring a balance between supply and demand for milk, he said.

Notice of the hearing will be published in the March 17 Federal Register. Copies may be obtained from the Dairy Division, Order Formulation Branch, USDA, AMS, Rm. 2968-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456.

Clarence Steinberg (202) 447-6179

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## **USDA PROPOSES TO QUARANTINE 35 STATES POSSIBLY INFESTED WITH VARROA MITE**

WASHINGTON, March 16—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing to quarantine 35 states, U.S. Territories or other possessions known or believed to be infested with the Varroa mite, a parasite of honeybees. "We are proposing to quarantine all "states" where Varroa mites are known to occur," said Al Strating, acting administrator of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. "In addition, because honeybees have been shipped from infested areas to commercial and hobbyist beekeepers throughout the United States, we would



preventively quarantine all states that have not conducted Varroa mite detection surveys. This action would make possible the identification and containment of Varroa mite infestations.”

The proposed quarantined areas: Alaska, American Samoa, Baker Island, California, Colorado, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Guam, Howland Island, Jarvis Island, Johnston Atoll, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kingman Reef, Maine, Massachusetts, Midway Islands, Navassa Island, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New York, North Dakota, Northern Mariana Islands, Ohio, Palmyra Atoll, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Republic of Palau, South Dakota, U.S. Virgin Islands, Wake Island, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

Strating said the regulations also would restrict the interstate movement of honeybees and bee equipment from quarantined areas to retard the spread of the mite. Such articles would have to undergo inspection and/or treatment before being allowed to move interstate. APHIS inspectors would then issue a certificate, limited permit, or transit visa depending on the regulated article and the extent of the planned interstate movement.

Varroa mites were first discovered in this country in a Wisconsin apiary in September 1987. APHIS imposed a quarantine April 6, 1988, to restrict movement of bees and bee equipment from infested states, but rescinded it one month later when the regulations proved too complex to administer successfully.

“Comments we received from federal and state officials, beekeepers, growers and researchers indicated that the initial quarantine measures were disrupting agricultural operations that depended on the interstate movement of honeybees for pollination,” said Strating. “However, many of those parties also suggested that we work with them to develop a new course of action. Accordingly, we decided to enter into regulatory negotiation, a technique which had never before been used in APHIS.”

Regulatory negotiation is a process whereby an official advisory committee—composed of private industry, government representatives, and other affected parties—is convened to draft regulations on a specific subject. Committee sessions are conducted by one or more neutral, thirdparty facilitators to ensure negotiations proceed smoothly.

According to Strating, the 15-member Varroa mite committee consisted of representatives from state departments of agriculture, beekeeping organizations, and related industry groups, including queen and package bee producers and migratory beekeepers. During these sessions held here Nov. 30-Dec. 2, 1988 and Jan. 5-6, the committee worked to reach



consensus on the need for a cooperative federal-state industry program and outlined the key elements of such a program, which were then used to develop a proposed regulation.

The Varroa mite is an external parasite of adult honeybees and their developing larvae, or brood. Infestations of the mite in bee colonies cause decreased brood numbers, deformed bees and weakening of colonies' ability to pollinate plants and produce honey. Varroa mite infestation can occur so gradually that it may go unnoticed until serious damage to colonies has already occurred. "We believe that frequent, new detections of the Varroa mite across the United States make it necessary for us to propose quarantine regulations to retard the interstate spread of this pest," said Strating. "We hope to be able to protect our beekeeping industry as well as the estimated \$20 billion worth of agricultural crops pollinated by bees each year."

The proposed regulation is in today's Federal Register. Comments will be considered if they are received on or before March 31. An original and two copies of written comments referring to Docket 89-002 may be sent to Helene R. Wright, Chief, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, USDA, Room 866, Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, Md. 20782.

Public comments and minutes of meetings of the Varroa Mite Negotiated Rulemaking Advisory Committee are available for review at USDA, Room 1141-S, 14th Street & Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C., between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays.

Caree Lawrence (301) 436-7280

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